

Committee on Ways and Means

Pharmacists' Unique Role Recognized Under Medicare Prescription Drug Bill

Ensuring Convenient Access to Pharmacies

- In the commercial, employer market, pharmacy benefit managers typically include about 95% of pharmacies in their networks. But the bill does not rely on the market to guarantee convenient access to pharmacies.
- All Medicare prescription drug plans must provide beneficiaries convenient access to a “bricks and mortar” pharmacy in their networks. “Convenient access” is defined and certified by Medicare, not the prescription drug plan.
- All prescription drug plans must offer a pharmacy “point of service option” that allows beneficiaries to access any and all out-of-network pharmacies for an additional charge.

Recognizing Pharmacists' Important Counseling Role

- Pharmacists are among the health care professionals that have the most expertise and knowledge about prescription drugs. They also spend more time than any other professional advising seniors on how to use their prescription drugs properly.
- The bill recognizes the pharmacists' critical counseling role by requiring prescription drug plans to establish, in cooperation with pharmacists, medication therapy management programs for patients with chronic health conditions. This will specifically recognize the valuable services pharmacists provide in improving medication compliance, decreasing adverse drug interactions and encouraging the use of cost-effective generics.

Pharmacists Play Key Role in Development of Formularies

- The bill requires each prescription drug plan to establish a pharmacy and therapeutic (P&T) committee to develop prescription formularies, lists of preferred drugs. The legislation *requires* prescription drug plans to have pharmacists on the P&T committee and that a majority of this committee be comprised of pharmacists and physicians.

Pharmacists Won't Be Singled Out by Prescription Drug Cards

- Authorization of a Medicare-endorsed prescription drug card is critical to getting seniors immediate relief on their prescription drug costs and helps build needed infrastructure to later deliver a fully funded prescription drug benefit.
- The bill requires that discounts be obtained from manufactures for the Medicare-endorsed Prescription Drug Card and that these discounts be passed on to beneficiaries. This differs from most prescription drug cards on the market, which get most of their savings from pharmacists, not manufacturers.